

*Noted by DCI
WE*

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21 September 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Continuation of Meeting with the President and Senior Officials on Saturday, 19 September

1. In addition to the discussion of the Gulf of Tonkin incident as related in another Memorandum for the Record, the following extraneous matters were brought up.

2. The President desired a weekly report from Ambassador Taylor giving his evaluation of what is happening in SVN -- politically, militarily, and economically -- whether or not things are improving or deteriorating, and just what the prognosis is in the eyes of the Ambassador. Action: Make sure that our Station is aware of this requirement and, if indicated, sends in parallel or additional reports to those of the Ambassador.

*AE advised
and will
take action.*

3. The President pointed out that there were only 46 days until the election and he continued to want to put the Administration in as favorable a light as possible. He hoped that those Cabinet agencies and other Governmental activities which had favorable things to report on, and worthy of note to promote the best interests of the Administration, would bring them to his attention. He stated that the Department of Defense had done the best job on this so far. He stated that the next 46 days would fly by fast and furiously and he anticipated more and more irrational attacks by the opposition. He asked Secretary Ball to work with Secretary Hodges to work up a press release on the Administration's attitude and activities as regards international trade with a view to pointing out to industrialists how favorable this Administration has been in this regard.

4. We then got involved in a long discussion of the Harris poll which indicates throughout a very clear superiority of the President over Goldwater.

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5. Secretary Rusk asked whether or not he should go to Dallas to speak before the Sons of the Republic of Texas. The President said to give him a day or so to look into this outfit and he would advise him later. Action: I asked at today's morning meeting for an independent reading on this outfit. *Done*

6. McNamara then mentioned a requirement to speak before the Dallas Council of World Affairs. The President said this was a good outfit. Action: Please give me an independent reading on this outfit. *Done*

7. The President then stated that he was totally dissatisfied with the names submitted to him for membership on the board of ComSat. He said he was to appoint three people and that he wanted nothing but the highest level of nonpartisan statesmanship -- the type of man that no one could possibly consider as a political hack or of not being of the highest order of competence. He said the names given to him were totally inadequate to meet this requirement and he wanted everyone to put their minds at work to come up with top-flight suggestions.

8. The President then said that he had been placed in a most embarrassing position by some major in the Pentagon who had announced the Tonkin Gulf incident as soon as he could blurt it out. The President was vehement in his denunciation of procedures which would allow such a thing to happen -- here he was being asked by the Associated Press what he was going to do about something before he had even had a chance to find out what the something was. He bore down hard on this with McNamara, Wheeler, Vance, and Rusk. He said he was not going to tolerate it and he wanted the word to get around that the responsibility of everyone was to inform the President of what was going on, to make recommendations for action to the President, and to give the President time to think things over and come up with a reasonable course of action in the best interests of the United States and national security -- and not to have people running around trying to get the word before the American public and the newspapers on a "scoop basis." The President was just as


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forceful at this time as he had been many months ago at a Sunday afternoon meeting at the White House under somewhat similar circumstances which I have previously reported.

9. Finally, in connection with the Tonkin Gulf action there was a long discussion as to how the best foot of the Administration should be put forward to combat the Goldwater headlines on irresponsibility of the Administration and not knowing what was going on. A lengthy discussion ensued as to whether the President should make the announcement or the White House with a Presidential backgrounder or McNamara or Rusk. There was discussion as to whether the President should appear on TV with McNamara and Rusk or just how the immediate release should be made. I said nothing during the entire discussion since I did not and do not consider this a matter for the Agency to become involved in. Finally the President turned to me and said, "What are your views on this matter, General?" I stated that I had no views and did not consider the matter within my competence. I did this specifically to ensure that the Agency, and I as well, were kept totally clean as to any domestic political inputs in this discussion. It is quite apparent to me that Rusk is trying to be a statesman but is having difficulty keeping out of the domestic political scene. It is also quite apparent that McNamara has no intention of trying to keep himself and the DOD leadership politically unsexed as has been the generally accepted practice in the past.

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Marshall S. Carter
Lieutenant General, USA
Acting Director

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